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**UZBEKISTAN**

## FIRST PERSON

# New Mother Influences Her Family

### A young mother convinces family about exclusive breastfeeding



Dilnoza Rashidova teaches expectant mothers how to feed their babies.  
Photo: Project HOPE

***WHO-recommended childcare practices, introduced in the country by USAID, find following in the Uzbek communities.***

Dilnoza Rashidova gave birth to her daughter Asila at Sariosiyo Village Medical Center in Kitab District, Kashkadarya Region. The center has been cooperating with the USAID and Project HOPE's Healthy Family program since 2005 to improve their maternal and child care practices. One of focus areas of this cooperation – promotion and support of breast feeding of children under the age of six months.

At birth, Dilnoza's daughter weighed only 2300 grams. "She was small and weak," - says Dilnoza. The baby was placed on her mother's chest right after birth, and kept in the same room throughout their stay at hospital. Medical workers taught Dilnoza how to look after the child correctly and told about the advantages of breastfeeding. The young woman was happy to follow their advice. "Brest milk helped my daughter to get better and start growing," –says Dilnoza.

But at home, Dilnoza's relatives had their own ideas on how to care about baby Asila. Dilgoza would frequently find her father-in-law feeding butter to Asila, and the mother-in-law gave her water from bottle. Even though Dilnoza insisted that the baby under six months of age does not need any other food or liquid, since the breast milk contains all necessary substances, each effort to persuade the relatives ended in an argument. The family refused to believe that baby Asila should stay exclusively on breast milk and tried to give her such foods as bread and sheep's fat.

Desperate for help, Dilnoza turned to local pediatricist Sharofat Nasrullaeva. The doctor, just like many of her colleagues at the medical center, had been trained by the USAID-supported program on WHO-recommended approaches to birth, benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, and counseling techniques. The doctor explained to Dilnoza's family about the harm of bottle feeding or pacifiers, and warned them about the consequences to the child if these rules are not observed. Doctor's word convinced Dilnoza's relatives, and they agreed to make sure that babv Asila stays only on breast milk until she becomes half a year old.

Once her baby was a bit older, Dilnoza joined the support group for young mothers, where she trains them how to nurse babies. She says with a smile that convincing young mothers is sometimes as difficult as mothers-in-law. Dilnoza has developed respect not only in her family, but the entire village. Despite her young age, everyone listens to her words at community events, and the village elderly are glad that this young bride is actively engaged in promoting community health.